

THE HONORABLE JOHN C. COUGHENOUR

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
WESTERN DISTRICT OF WASHINGTON  
AT SEATTLE

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,  
  
Plaintiff,  
  
v.  
  
BLANCA MEDINA,  
  
Defendant.

CASE NO. CR20-0092-JCC-18  
  
ORDER

This matter comes before the Court on Defendant's motion to proceed with a plea hearing by video or teleconference (Dkt. No. 630). Having thoroughly considered the motion and the relevant record, the Court hereby GRANTS the motion for the reasons explained herein.

On April 15, 2021, Defendant pleaded not guilty to charges contained in a Second Superseding Indictment. (*See* Dkt. Nos. 378, 472.) Defendant has since elected to change her plea and moves for a change of plea hearing, seeking to enter a plea remotely by video or teleconference in light of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on this Court's in-person operations. (Dkt. No. 630.)

Because of the health risks posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Court may conduct a felony plea hearing by video or teleconference if a defendant consents and the Court finds that the plea hearing cannot be further delayed without serious harm to the interests of justice. *See* Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, Pub. L. No. 116-136,

1 §§ 15002(b)(2)(A), (b)(4), 134 Stat. 281, 528–29 (2020); W.D. Wash. General Order Nos. 14-21  
2 (Dec. 22, 2021), 04-20 (March 30, 2020).

3 Here, Defendant has a strong interest in the speedy resolution of this matter, (*see* Dkt.  
4 No. 630), and, based on the current uptick in COVID-19 cases, it is not clear when the Court will  
5 resume in-person proceedings. *See* W.D. Wash. General Order No. 16-21 at 1 (Dec. 30, 2021).  
6 As a result, the Court FINDS that unnecessarily delaying Defendant’s change of plea hearing  
7 further would cause serious harm to the interests of justice.

8 For the foregoing reasons, the Court GRANTS Defendant’s motion to proceed with a  
9 remote plea hearing (Dkt. No. 630). The Court ORDERS that Defendant’s guilty plea hearing be  
10 set as soon as practicable before a Magistrate Judge and be conducted by video or telephonic  
11 conference. A record of Defendant’s consent to proceed via remote hearing should be made at  
12 that time.

13 DATED this 5th day of January 2022.

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A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "John C. Coughenour", is written over a horizontal line.

John C. Coughenour  
UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE